KnowHow #3

"BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY"

INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE FROM MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

GOVDOC BCA 2948

gov. 99-801

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

The National Register is the nation's official list of buildings, districts, sites, structures, and objects important in American history, culture, architecture, or archaeology. The National Register program is administered through the Massachusetts Historical Commission on behalf of the Department of the Interior.

CRITERIA FOR LISTING

The criteria for listing in the National Register are: a) association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; b) association with the lives of persons significant in our past; c) embodiment of distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or d) likelihood of yielding information significant in history or prehistory.

Nominations are based on comprehensive local inventories of cultural resources. Inventories are generally compiled on a community-wide basis by local historical commissions, and record basic information about the historic, architectural, and archaeological significance of the individual properties and districts in a community. The completed inventory allows preservation decisions to be made within a consistent context, and to identify properties that are eligible for listing in the National Register.

1. How do I get my property listed in the National Register?

Contact your local historical commission or the MHC to determine whether an inventory form has been prepared for your property or if any additional information is required; ask your local historical commission to forward their recommendation to the MHC regarding the property's eligibility for the National Register.

If your property is eligible, the MHC will send you a nomination form and an instruction manual. You may wish to work with the local historical commission in completing the nomination or seek the assistance of a professional preservation consultant.

MHC staff will review your nomination submission for completeness and may request additional information. When complete, MHC staff will edit and process your nomination form and present it to the Massachusetts Historical Commission at one of their monthly meetings.

The Massachusetts Historical Commission will review the nomination and vote whether to nominate the property to the National Register of Historic Places.

The nomination will be forwarded to the National Park Service in Washington, D.C. for the listing of the property in the National Register of Historic Places.

2. What are the benefits of being listed in the National Register?

RECOGNITION: The National Register recognizes the significance of a property to the community, state, and/or nation.

TAX INCENTIVES: National Register listing allows the owners of income-producing properties certain federal tax incentives for substantial rehabilitation according to standards set by the Department of Interior.

PROTECTION: National Register properties are afforded limited protection from adverse effects of federally assisted projects; and, through automatic inclusion in the State Register of Historic Places, limited protection from state actions.

GRANTS: Inclusion in the State Register of Historic Places provides eligibility for matching state grants for renovation of properties owned by private non-profit organizations and municipalities.

80 BOYLSTON STREET • BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02116 • (617) 727-8470

3. Will National Register listing restrict the use of my property?

Listing in the National Register in no way interferes with a property owner's right to alter, manage, or sell the property when you are using private funds. However, if you use state or federal funds to alter your property, or need state or federal permits, the alteration will be reviewed by the MHC staff. Local funding and permitting does not trigger MHC review.

4. What is a National Register District?

Properties may be nominated to the National Register either individually or, if they are located within areas containing other contiguous, significant properties, as districts. A National Register District may include any number of properties. The protections afforded by listing are the same.

5. Can my property be listed in the National Register if my town's inventory is incomplete?

Yes, in some cases. There are three exceptions to MHC's policy not to consider properties for the National Register in communities with incomplete inventories.

If you can demonstrate that: 1) you, as the owner of income-producing property, are planning to do certified rehabilitation work and need National Register status in order to use the federal investment tax credits; 2) your property is in imminent danger of destruction; or 3) your property is of demonstrated state or national significance, you may then submit a letter to MHC requesting a National Register evaluation for your property and stating why you want to have the property listed. However, you should note that without complete survey information, the eligibility of properties is difficult to establish. You will probably need to conduct supplemental survey work to provide a context to evaluate the significance of your property.

6. If my house is listed in the National Register, are grant monies available for rehabilitation work?

At present, the MHC does not administer federal or state rehabilitation funds for private homeowners. State grant monies are available only for properties owned by municipalities and non-profit organizations. Federal tax credits are available for substantial rehabilitation of income-producing and commercial properties.

7. Can I object to having my property listed in the National Register?

Yes. Once you receive notice that your property is being considered for listing on the National Register by the State Review Board, you may submit a notarized letter of objection. If your property is within a proposed National Register district, a majority of property owners must submit notarized objections in order to prevent listing. In both cases the National Park Service may still formally determine the property(ies) eligible for the National Register, although listing will not occur.

8. Where do I go for assistance in preparing a National Register application?

Your local historical commission, local historical society, and library can provide useful resource material. Professional preservation consultants can assist you or your local historical commission with completion of the National Register nomination form. Also, when funds are available, matching Survey and Planning grants are awarded annually through MHC to fund professional National Register work. For more information, contact the MHC.

(circa 1985)